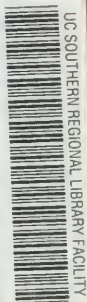


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Breaking the Spell

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BREAKING  
THE SPELL

AN  
APPEAL TO  
COMMON  
SENSE

*The Simplified Spelling Society  
44 Great Russell Street  
London W.C.*



# Breaking the Spell

*AN APPEAL TO  
COMMON SENSE*

*WITH A PREFACE BY*

REGINALD W. MACAN

MASTER OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

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## P R E F A C E

*SPELLING should be the simplest of all arts : as easy as A, B, C, with nothing to remember but the names, or sounds, of the letters ; and, for reading, their shapes, or appearance. In some living languages—Spanish, Italian, Welsh, Dutch—and in dead Greek and Latin (if properly taught) reading and spelling are as easy as that. But English—a tongue in the simple spelling of which one quarter at least of the human race is directly interested, and the rest would gladly learn to spell it if they could ; English, with its grammar the simplest, with its vocabulary the richest of living languages—presents in its orthography, or orthodox spelling, a mass and maze of anomalies and difficulties, which make the acquisition of the correct pronunciation and the conventional spelling an insoluble problem to native and foreigner alike. The majority of our own people never acquire mastery of the language. Even the educated ~~man~~ of business writes with a dictionary at ~~his~~ elbow. Correct spelling and pronunciation are the aristocratic privilege of the few. The orthodox spelling of*

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*English has, in course of time, owing to well known historical causes and for want of authoritative readjustment to the unconscious but inevitable changes always at work in pronunciation, come to have so little relation to the audible speech that every man, woman, child, who would fain read, write, and speak a tolerable English must set out to learn two distinct and independent languages—the one, English as spoken; the other, English as printed. Our spelling has become a mystery, a convention, without rules or reason; a constant exercise of memory, a constant recourse to the dictionary, a perpetual setting of conundrums, a tiresome game of hide and seek, an exasperating waste of time and material and energy, which might be very much better employed. No mortal can tell at sight how an English word is to be pronounced, nor how to write an English word, heard for the first time. The chaos of English orthography is unscientific, inartistic, unbusinesslike; and every competent judge, be his interests educational, or scholarly, or simply commercial; be he teacher, or student, or manufacturer and merchant, is in favour of reform. Why, then, tarry the wheels of the Reform-chariot?*

*Every attempt at reform, in this department, encounters two tremendous obstacles. In the first place, spelling reformers are up against the apathy, the ignorance, and the prejudice of the adult popula-*



tion, the grown-ups, educated or semi-educated. Those who have acquired the technical trick of spelling, and forgotten, or never considered, what their proficiency has cost them, are apt to say, with becoming modesty, that what they have done others can do likewise: are apt to protest, having learnt to spell after one fashion, against being asked to unlearn the lesson and start afresh; are apt to declare that, to reprint English prose and poetry in a new fashion, however simple and scientific, would destroy for them all the charm of reading and all facility of writing the language. They will seldom consider the educational interests of the rising generation, or the commercial interests of the nation, twenty years hence. Having no desire or intention to amend their own way of spelling, they fail to appreciate the *damnosa hereditas*—the costly and ruinous legacy—they are bequeathing to their children and their children's children.

The educational argument for a reform of our spelling ought alone to carry the day. Every child who learns to spell correctly has, on the average, wasted a thousand hours of school-time in acquiring this precious accomplishment. That figure, multiplied throughout the nation, the Commonwealth, the Empire—to say nothing of other lands and peoples—might give some idea of the sheer waste of time and energy in the education of the young. The indirect

*reaction of an irrational spelling upon growing and inquiring minds should not be forgotten. The proverbial incuria of the English mind—its indifference to the application of scientific intelligence and method to the problems of life—is, in my opinion, not unconnected with the irrationality of our spelling. If we had had a reform in our spelling we should not still be clamouring for the adoption of the metric system in our weights and measures. Our orthography defeats the attempts of foreigners to learn English; it is a bar to the wider, perhaps the almost universal, employment of English in the intercourse, commercial and spiritual, of mankind.*

*Spelling reform becomes, from this point of view, a business proposition, if not for to-day, at least for to-morrow, and every day after. Economy of time, substance, and labour, facility of communication as well without as within the strictly English-speaking world, contain a promise of wealth “passing the dreams of avarice,” if not for this or that individual, yet for the nation, as such, and for the generations to come. English men of business, the merchant, the manufacturer, have incurred many reproaches of late for their want of faith in science, in up-to-date methods, for their short sight, and failure to adapt themselves to the needs of the market, actual and potential. Can one defend them from such reproaches, in view of the fact that the English busi-*

*ness world has not yet insisted on the adoption of the metric system and on the simplification of English spelling?*

*But here crops up the second chief difficulty encountered by Spelling Reform: the Reformers are not agreed among themselves as to the reforms to be adopted; there are half a dozen or more competing schemes, and the plain ~~man~~ is driven back upon the established dictionary. But at least all Reformers agree in condemning the existing orthography; and it has been well said that any one of the competing schemes would be more scientific and more satisfactory than the present muddle. Every expert must admit that for a completely adequate and truly phonetic reform a good many letters must be added to the alphabet; and this prospect is one of the most alarming features of some of the proposed solutions. It is just here that the scheme of the Simplified Spelling Society comes in. Few, if any, members of the Society would deny that, for a fully scientific orthography, which would also be the simplest orthography, of English, some increase in the alphabet is necessary; but, for such a reform, Governmental and Parliamentary authority will be necessary, and such authority is hard to obtain. There are no votes in phonetic spelling as an electioneering cry. Meanwhile, Simplified Spelling makes a good beginning with the existing alphabet, and has come wonderfully*

*near the phonetic canon: "one sign, one sound." It gets rid of most of the anomalies and confusions of the established tyranny; it offers a fairly self-consistent method; it is rational, economical, and easily acquired; it can be adopted in toto or by degrees; it it has been proved a success in school teaching. Should it but serve ultimately as the pioneer of a still more complete and radical reform, should it succeed in dissolving some of the prejudice against every reform, by the sweet reasonableness and moderation of its claims, it will more than justify the pains and labour which its promoters have bestowed upon it. To the printer it makes a special appeal, for it asks him merely to economize; he need neither scrap nor multiply his types. To the child it opens a short cut to literature and learning, for actual experiment has shown that the child who starts on Simplified Spelling arrives at reading even the current hieroglyphics of English more easily and quickly than his fellow who has been nurtured solely on conundrums and enigmas of orthography. It lightens and brightens the teacher's labours. It reduces writer's cramp. It abbreviates the rappings of the typographer. It saves time, money, and toil. It appeals to common sense. Shall it appeal wholly in vain?*

REGINALD W. MACAN.

March, 1917.

# BREAKING THE SPELL

*It is the generations of children to come who appeal to us to save them from the affliction which we have endured and forgotten.*—WHITNEY.

WE do not know who was the first ~~man~~ to write a word. For long centuries language existed only as speech. The invention of written signs to represent the spoken language was a momentous advance in civilization. It made it possible to communicate thoughts to those at a distance, far beyond the range of the voice, thoughts that would survive even when the voice of the ~~man~~ that conceived them had long been hushed by death.

This is not the place to discuss the gradual development of writing ; how some nations came to use a sign to designate a whole word, and others used it for a syllable. The nations that we know best preferred an alphabet in which each sign represented one sound. It is clear that there are fewer different sounds than different syllables in a language, and therefore that we need fewer signs if we let each represent a sound only.

With such an alphabet, in which each sign represents one sound, and each sound has its own sign, spelling becomes a very simple matter ; for if you know the sounds of a word, you can at once write the corresponding signs. For instance, if you know that the sign for the sound *b* is the letter *b*, the sign for the sound *e* is the letter *e*, and the sign for the sound *d* is the letter *d*, then on hearing the sounds of the word *bed* you know that the spelling is *bed*.

If such an alphabet is in use, then all we have to teach the child is the signs corresponding to the sounds.

### DEFECTS OF THE PRESENT SPELLING

Let us consider whether our present English spelling can be learnt in this simple and rational fashion. Up to the point of *b e d = bed* (not a very advanced point) all is plain sailing. But take another word : The child hears the sound of *d* the sound of *e*, and again the sound of *d*. The spelling therefore should be *ded* ; but we have to inform the child that this is not the case, and

that the word contains a silent *a*. On the other hand, when the child sees the word *bead*, we have to tell him that here the *a* is not silent ; the two signs *ea* here have the same value as *ee* in *feed*. The child is told that the word *toe* is spelt with *oe*. But when he meets the word *toad* he is told not to spell *toed* ; and when he comes to *poet* we warn him against the pronunciation *pote*. The child learns that *road* has *oa*, like *toad* ; but when he proceeds to write "The man road in a carriage, and the boy road a boat," we have to explain that although the sounds are the same in these three words he must learn a different spelling for each—*road*, *rode*, *rowed*.

The child learns that the vowel in *bit* is written with the letter *i* ; but he is not allowed to give the same pronunciation to the letter *i* when he meets it in *find*. In this word, he is told, the letter *i* has the same value as in *I*. As he uses this letter in *find* and *I*, he will naturally want to use it in *my*, *high*, *eye*. But if he does so, he is assured that this is wrong. Nothing in the sound of the word *eye* shows that it should be spelt differently from *I*.

The child is told that the sounds of the word *true* are written *t r u e*. A word is uttered with

another sound at the end, which he knows is written *th*; so he spells *trueth*, only to be told that this is wrong and that here there is no *e*. Having learnt the spelling of *true*, the child hears a word in which the *t* is at the end instead of the beginning, and proceeds to write *ruet*; wrong again. Having learnt that the spelling is *root* he hears a word containing the same sounds, but with *f* in front; so he writes *froot*, and has to learn that he must write *fruit*. Or, having learnt the spelling of *root*, he hears a word very much like it, but ending in *d* instead of *t*, and writes "he was *rood*." Once more the poor child has gone wrong, through no fault of his own.

Not even the consonants are represented in a consistent way. The mere sound of the word *knit* does not tell us that we must write it with *k*; the first sound of *sit* and of *city* is the same, nothing shows that *s* is not right in both cases; nothing in the sound of the words *literal* and *litter* indicates that in the second case a single *t* does not suffice to represent the sound of *t*.

It is clear that in English the sounds do not, as a rule, afford trustworthy guidance to the spelling. There are a few words like *sit*, *bed*, *lot*



in which the spelling is satisfactory from this point of view ; but the great majority of common words are not spelt according to any easily understood system, or, indeed, according to any system whatever.

#### HOW OUR SPELLING BECAME WHAT IT IS

This was not always the case. Long ago, when English ceased to be only a spoken language and came also to be written, the spelling represented the sounds in a fairly consistent way. The *k* that people wrote in *knave*, the *gh* in *night*, the *w* in *write*, were all pronounced ; so was the *e* at the end of *name*. In those days children had little trouble in learning to spell. After a time, however, the spelling no longer represented the pronunciation in such a simple and straightforward way ; and for this there were several reasons.

The pronunciation kept on changing. It is always changing, though not always at the same rate. When all the children of a country go to school and are taught reading and writing in the same way, their speech is less liable to change

especially if the spelling shows them in an unmistakable way what the sounds are. In bygone days when the schools were few and the mother tongue was neglected, there was nothing to prevent the pronunciation from changing a great deal, far more than the speech of the educated does at present. But the spelling did not keep pace with the pronunciation; people went on writing certain letters even though the sounds that they once represented had changed or had disappeared.

For a time English was written by many who came from Normandy and by their descendants. They were accustomed to writing French, and when they wrote English they often represented sounds in the same way as in French. The word *house* used to be pronounced as we should pronounce it if it were written *hoos*; in French this vowel sound is written *ou* (as in the French word *tout*); and the spelling *ou* thus came to be introduced in the word *house*, taking the place of the older *u*.

When books were first printed in England the compositors often spelt the same word in different ways; there were no fixed rules. Some had learnt

their trade in Holland ; and memories of Dutch spelling survive in such words as *ghost*, which should have no *h* in English ; *h* occurred in the Dutch word that had the same meaning.

Before long the spelling became more or less fixed. Only a few slight changes have been made in the last centuries ; we no longer write *musick*, and have given up *honor* in favour of *honour* (on the advice of Dr. Johnson). These changes in the spelling, however, are insignificant if we compare them with the changes that have taken place in the spoken language. The breach between the sounds and their signs has become wider and wider, until—as we have seen—the sounds have ceased to be a guide to us in spelling.

#### THE IDEA THAT THE SPELLING SHOULD SHOW THE DERIVATION

There is, however, another way in which our spelling was rendered different from the spoken language.

In the Middle Ages Latin was held in high honour, and the mother tongue was treated with

contempt. When the scholars of those days did condescend to pay some attention to English, they had the feeling that it was a very inferior language to Latin, which was used for all higher purposes, for religious worship and study, for education, and so on. They could not help noticing that some English words were connected with Latin words; but they had undergone a change. Any change from the original Latin form was, in their eyes, manifestly a change for the worse. So they set about restoring what they could. The Latin words from which the French words are derived that gave us *debt* and *doubt* contain a *b*, so the *b* was written—although no one pronounced it. The word *perfect* had lost its *c* (Chaucer spells it “parfit”); they put the *c* back, and after a time people actually pronounced it.

In making these changes it is clear that the true purpose of spelling—to represent the sounds and nothing else—was ignored. The written form of the word was now made a means of indicating the derivation, and it was brought closer to the spelling of the word from which it had developed.

Now the scholars of the Middle Ages knew very little of historical grammar, and consequently

their activity with regard to the spelling was often quite misdirected. They wrongly thought that the word *rime* was derived from the word which has given us *rhythm*, and changed it to *rhyme*. It was imagined that soveran was connected with *reign*, and so it was changed to *sovereign*.

Nowadays the study of historical grammar occupies the serious attention of many learned scholars ; and they know much that was unknown or unregarded in the Middle Ages. They know that if we wanted to make words show their derivation by restoring all letters that have disappeared we should have a very difficult task ; the words would become much longer than they are. It would, indeed, be impossible to tell where we should stop. Some words, for instance, have come into English from French ; the French word may go back to a Latin word, which in turn may come from a Greek word.<sup>1</sup> How are we to indicate all this in the spelling ? Are we to make it resemble the French word, or the Latin word, or the Greek word ? Or shall we go beyond Greek ? The

<sup>1</sup> Thus our word *blame*, from French *blâme*, ultimately goes back to the Greek word that has also given us *blasphemy*.

Greek word itself does not give us the oldest form ; scholars suggest a still older form from which they conjecture the Greek word was derived.

A language may be regarded from two points of view : as a means of communicating thought and as a subject of study ; just as you can use a horse for riding and drawing vehicles, or study it as a zoologist does. The medieval scholars who burdened us with such spellings as *debt* and *sovereign* were scholars and not practical men. They thought they were improving the language by making it more valuable from the philological point of view ; they did not realize that they were complicating the spelling and thus rendering the written language a less simple and satisfactory means of communicating thought.

Furthermore, most of the misspellings afford no indication of the past history of the language, except to the learned specialist ; and even if they did give such information to an appreciable number of people, no one wants to know or remember precisely what muscles a horse is using every time ~~he~~ rides or drives it.

HABIT HAS BLINDED US TO THE DEFECTS  
OF OUR SPELLING

We have now seen why the spelling has gradually ceased to be a simple representation of the living, spoken language. We cannot help realizing that it contains superfluous letters that nobody pronounces, and many ways of representing the same sounds. Yet we continue to use this spelling and make our children learn it, at great expense of time and effort.

The fact is that most of us have forgotten the time and effort it cost us when we were children. When we come to think about the early years of our school life, most of us have only hazy memories, and very few of us are able to criticize the methods that were employed by our teachers. We learnt to spell, somehow, and we went on spelling and reading words in the same spelling, year after year. The present form of words has become familiar to us—few things, indeed, could be more familiar than the form of the common words in our language. Some of them we read and write hundreds, perhaps thousands, of times every day.

Habit plays a great part in our lives. The buttons on the back of our overcoats, once used for buttoning back the full skirt, no longer serve any useful purpose ; but we are content to keep them. They would be equally useless at the end of the coat-tail, but if we saw any one with buttons in this position it would shock us extremely. We wear white ties with evening dress ; they are of no use, but if at a party we met a friend without a tie we should almost hesitate to point it out, and if we did, he would be very uncomfortable. Our eye has become accustomed to seeing each word always spelt in its own peculiar way. It is accustomed to *bed* and *dead*, to *root* and *fruit*, to *write* and *right*, and a thousand other inconsistencies. It no longer sees the grotesque appearance of these words.

Probably you resent the use of the word "grotesque." You would prefer to call it "interesting" or "picturesque."

Just try to imagine that you had been differently accustomed : that you had learnt to spell the language by some system that really represented the sounds. Imagine that you had grown accustomed to regularity and simplicity of spelling. What would you have said to the man who proposed to



spell *tough* and *stuff*, *after* and *laughter*, *plough* and *cow* as we actually spell them? How would you have received the suggestion that *det* and *dout* should be written with *b* because the Latin words from which the French words are derived which gave us the English words contained a *b*—two thousand years ago? Suppose you had been accustomed to write *tho*, would you not have thought the man mad who proposed to add *ugh* to it? Suppose you had been accustomed to write *nee*, *nit*, and *naw*, how grotesque would you have deemed the idea of prefixing a *k* to the first and second, and a *g* to the third! Suppose you had been accustomed to write *wai* and *kaut*, would you not have thought the spellings *weigh* and *caught* as ludicrous as they are senseless? You would have said: "This man is trying to spoil the language, to disturb what we have grown accustomed to. We like to spell the words as we pronounce them; we like their written and printed form. What would be the gain if we adopted these changes?"

WHAT SHOULD WE GAIN FROM A  
SIMPLIFIED SPELLING ?

But you have not been accustomed to a regular, simple spelling. You have learnt the spelling of words, not of sounds, and by dint of constant practice you are able without effort to reproduce the conventional spelling. And the proposal is put to you to change that spelling, to acquire fresh habits. You are asked to consider the living, spoken language, and to write as you speak. Such a change in your habits means some temporary discomfort, that is clear. Naturally you ask : "What would be the gain if we adopted these changes ?"

THE GAIN TO OUR CHILDREN

It must be said at once that the chief gain would not be yours ; the change would, above all, benefit those who have to learn the spelling—far less, those who have learnt it. You are asked to consider this question in its bearings on the children in our schools—not only now, but through all the centuries to come—and in its bearings on British subjects and foreigners who have to learn our language.

Above all things, consider our children, and especially the children who attend the elementary schools. Go into these schools, and convince yourself of the vast amount of time and energy spent by the teachers and the learners alike in memorizing the spelling of words. It has been shown above that the sounds do not guide the child to the correct spelling; the spelling of hundreds upon hundreds of words has to be learnt. It is not too much to say that from one and a half to two years of the child's school life are taken up by this memorizing. Now suppose that, instead of learning the spelling of individual words, the child had only to learn how to distinguish the sounds of the language and to produce them correctly; that we then gave ~~the~~ the sign or signs corresponding to each sound, and bade ~~the~~ spell as ~~the~~ pronounced. The scheme here presented can be learnt by a grown-up person in less than half an hour; let us say that a child would take three months. Does not that represent a notable saving? The school life of these children is deplorably short; are we justified in continuing to waste their time as we do at present?

There is yet another gain for the child. At present ~~the~~ is rarely taught to distinguish the

sounds ; but if we teach a spelling that depends upon the sounds, we cannot neglect them. What does this mean? It means that teachers and learners will become more observant of the spoken language : that they will pay more attention to clear speech and all that this implies — namely, good breathing, careful articulation, and expressive intonation. When we listen to a ~~man~~<sup>person</sup> who speaks clearly we are pleased ; we cannot help feeling that it is too uncommon an accomplishment. Let the spelling be closely connected with the sounds, and the cultivation of the speaking voice is bound to follow.

#### THE GAIN TO ALL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

English is in many respects an easy language. Its grammar is remarkably simple. Its only great weakness lies in its spelling. Nothing else stands in the way of its being the language of international intercourse. Simplify the spelling, and you make it easier for the French Canadian, for our Dutch fellow subjects in South Africa, for the natives of India, to learn the language of the Empire. Simplify the spelling, and you increase the number of

foreigners able to read and to appreciate our language. And what gain does that bring us? It means that the words written in our language, expressing our thoughts and aims, will be more widely read and better understood ; it means ever-increasing influence for our journalists, novelists, and dramatists, for our ~~area~~ of learning and our ~~area~~ of practical genius.

#### THE GAIN IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

It is, however, not only the foreigner learning English who would find ~~his~~ task lighter ; the English ~~man~~ learning a foreign language would also be benefited. One of the great difficulties that besets our path when we learn a foreign language is the pronunciation. Now, of late years many have been working hard to see how the English child can best be taught the pronunciation of a foreign language ; and they have come to the conclusion that the child must know something about the sounds of English before ~~he~~ can be taught the sounds of French or any other foreign language in the best way. This is not mere speculation ; practical experience in many schools has led to results which

would have been regarded as altogether unattainable fifteen years ago. The Modern Language teacher now has to spend much time in teaching ~~the~~ pupils about English sounds. If our children all learnt this when they were first taught to read and write, they would find it far easier than at present to learn the pronunciation of foreign languages.

#### OUR PRESENT NEGLECT OF THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE

It is strange how the neglect of the spoken language has rendered many quite ignorant of the sounds that they utter so many times every day. People express surprise when they realize that the sound at the end of *dogs* is not *s*, but *z*; that the sound at the beginning of *thin* is not the same as that in *then*; that the first sound of *jet* is *d*; that the usual pronunciation of the vowel in *was*, *had* is not the same as that of *what* and *hat*. It has not struck them that they do not pronounce the *p* in *cupboard*, the *d* in *handkerchief*, the *t* in *castle*; and that the endings of *able* and *label*, *constant* and *persistent*, *stationary* and *stationery* are the same in sound.

Perhaps no other nation of those in the first rank is so ignorant of the sounds of the spoken language, and at the same time so respectful towards a spelling that is full of redundant letters and inconsistencies.

Every ~~man~~<sup>one</sup> who has made a special study of the English language will tell you that it is a thoroughly bad spelling. Among the pioneers of spelling reform may be mentioned Prof. Skeat, Dr. Furnivall, Sir James Murray, and many other famous English scholars.

### WOULD THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING OBSCURE THE HISTORY OF WORDS?

*Most people don't care what it meant in the past!!*

It has probably occurred to you that if the spelling should be simplified, the history of words would be obscured. You have been thinking about the possible objections to the proposed changes, and this has struck you at once. Is your apprehension justified?

You say that you are interested in tracing derivations, that words in their present form tell you their story. How much they tell you depends

on how much you know of other languages—French, German, Latin, or Greek.

But what do the elementary school children know of these languages? Clearly, in their case, this argument against change would have no weight.

How many of those who learn English know more than one foreign language at all well?

Let us assume that you know French, German, Latin, and Greek, and that you have a sufficient knowledge of these languages to be able to connect English words with all kindred words in these languages. Look at any passage in simplified spelling; you will confess that the changes made have rarely rendered the connexion obscure. Indeed, in some cases the connexion becomes more clear when the spelling of a word has been simplified: *sent* is closer to Latin *sentio* than *scent*, and *muther* is closer to the German *Mutter* than *mother*.

Even granting that the simplified spelling does sometimes obscure the derivation, you must confess that your interest in the history of words is one thing, and your ordinary use of the spoken, written, or printed word another. While you are talking,



or reading a newspaper, or writing a letter, you are not at the same time thinking about the history of the words you use. You may occasionally let your thoughts dwell on this aspect of language, but then you look at words from quite a different point of view. Would you stand in the way of securing a great gain for the children of coming generations because of such considerations as this?

Remember, too, that even when the simplified spelling is in general use, the present spelling, the "old spelling" as it will then be called, will still be familiar to everybody; for the enormous number of books now in existence will not have been swept away. Everybody with any claim to education will be able to read the "old spelling." It will assuredly not command admiration or respect; but people will consent to read it, because of the books printed in it. No one will dream of writing it, because of the labour involved in learning the bad "old spelling." There will be students of the language then as now; let us hope there will be far more. To them the "old spelling" will occasionally prove useful, but not as often as might now be thought. To the student of language

a spelling that deviates so far from the pronunciation affords no very satisfactory aid in ~~its~~ researches. The spelling of an earlier age proves to ~~be~~ that *knight* and *knave* had a sounded *k*; our spelling with *k* gives no clue to the present pronunciation of these words.

It is no exaggeration to say that for one person who ever thinks of the derivation of words there are a thousand who suffer from our bad spelling; and that one in a thousand does not need the misspellings to remind ~~him~~ of the derivation. "The scholar does not need these indications to help ~~him~~ to the pedigree of the words with which ~~he~~ deals, and the ignorant is not helped by them; the one knows without, the other does not know with them, so that in either case they are profitable for nothing." Or, as Sainte-Beuve neatly puts it: "Pour une lettre de plus ou de moins, les ignorants ne sauront pas mieux reconnaître l'origine du mot, et les hommes instruits la reconnaîtront toujours."

WOULD CONFUSION ARISE FROM WORDS HAVING  
THE SAME SPELLING THAT ARE NOW SPELT  
DIFFERENTLY ?

Perhaps the words *knight* and *knave* suggest another difficulty to you : if the *k* is no longer written, how are we to distinguish these words from *night* and *nave* ? The words *write*, *right*, and *rite*, the words *road*, *rowed*, and *rode* sound alike ; will there not be confusion if the spelling is the same ?

How would you answer the question : *bear* (the animal) and (I) *bear* have the same sound and the same spelling ; have you ever confused them ? Why not ? Because the rest of the sentence makes the meaning clear. The same is true of *knight* and *night* and all the other words that sound alike but differ in meaning. When you talk about a *knight* you do not feel it necessary to pronounce the *k* to show that you mean *knight* and not *night* ; and it is equally unnecessary to write the *k* for this purpose. The rest of the sentence leaves no doubt as to the meaning. In a very few cases ambiguities might arise ; how rare they are you will realize if you try to construct such a sentence.

Sometimes the simplified spelling actually makes the meaning clearer. If I write the words: I *read* it, you do not know whether I mean *read* for the present or the past ; in the simplified spelling the past would be *red*, in accordance with the pronunciation. A "*row* of houses" would no longer be spelt in the same way as "making a *row*." The noun *tear* would not have the same spelling as the verb *tear*.

#### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS REFORM.

You have now come to understand that the simplification of the spelling is a matter worthy of your earnest attention. You know well that it is easy to make fun of attempts at spelling reform. The narrow-minded ~~man~~, hidebound by prejudice, resents any suggestion that what is familiar to ~~him~~ might be changed with advantage ; ~~he~~ likes to go on doing in ~~a~~ unthinking way what ~~he~~ has always done. ~~He~~ objects to change because change disturbs ~~his~~ comfort, and because ~~he~~ recoils from the mental effort required by a serious consideration of the changes proposed. ~~He~~ tries to thwart all attempts at improving the spelling, by pointing to

this word or that in its changed form, and appealing to the prejudices of others ; perhaps even travesties the efforts of reformers by suggesting imaginary and obviously absurd spellings as likely to meet with their approval.

You, on the other hand, realize that, if a real simplification could be effected, its adoption would have very important and far-reaching results ; and you would like to know how we can arrive at such a simplified spelling and how we can secure its adoption.

### THE PROBLEM OF SPELLING REFORM.

If we desire to improve the spelling, we can set about it in several ways ; but the general principle must be to bring it into closer agreement with the sounds of the spoken language.

At first sight it would seem to be the easiest method to ascertain how many sounds we have, and to assign a letter to each. We very soon, however, meet with difficulties in the attempt to do this. We recognize that there are more sounds in English speech than there are letters in our alpha-

bet ; so that we should require new letters or, at least, "diacritics" (that is, accents, dots, &c.) over or under the existing letters. Additions to the alphabet are awkward, because they mean fresh types in our printing establishments, the re-modelling of typewriters, linotype machines, &c., and changes in the Morse alphabet (used in signalling, telegraphing, &c.).

Diacritics are not a good device. Such diacritics as we now possess (the dot on *i*, the cross line of *t*) are troublesome ; but any considerable number of diacritics would prove a real nuisance in writing, for the addition of a dot or accent interferes with the flow of the pen. The presence of diacritics is also a disadvantage in reading. We read words as wholes and what helps us to recognize words is particularly the top outline. The presence of tall letters makes this distinctive ; but the addition of diacritics blurs the outline. The printer, too, does not like diacritics ; the little additional marks are very liable to be broken off.

Many kinds of phonetic spelling have been devised. Some are used in dictionaries to indicate the pronunciation of words ; others have been used particularly for the purpose of teaching

foreigners the sounds of English. If you look at any of these you will find that they make extensive use either of diacritics or of new letters or of inverted letters ; and that to write English in this way would change the appearance of the language very much and make it much more difficult for those who have acquired the new spelling to read books printed in the present spelling.

Another and more promising way of solving the problem is to examine the current spelling ; to consider in what ways each sound is spelt at present ; and then to choose that spelling which appears to be the most common. This will give us a spelling based on present usage, containing only familiar letters and requiring no diacritics. Sometimes, it is true, we may find that two or three ways of spelling a sound are equally common ; then we may choose that spelling which is most convenient for other reasons. Sometimes, too, we may find it necessary to combine two letters (to use a "digraph") in a way which is new : for instance, our language has no convenient representation of the sound heard in *vision*, *measure*, and for this we may use *zh*, showing the connexion of the sound with the *sh* of *mesh*.

## THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CONSONANTS

When we consider the consonants, we find that there are many which, from our point of view, are quite satisfactory ; that is to say, each sound is usually represented in one way only. The sound *b* is regularly spelt *b* ; the child finds it easy to remember that when he hears *bit*, the first letter of the word is a *b*. The same is true of *p*, *d*, *t* ; the consonants of *bed*, *pet* give no trouble. The letters in the following words that are in bold type are also used in a satisfactory way : **met**, **win**, **very**, **fan**, **zest**, **so**, **this**,<sup>1</sup> **hot**, **lot**. All these letters we can adopt in our simplified spelling. This does not mean that we can always use them where they occur in the present spelling. The second *s* of *sees* does not stand for the sound *s*, but for the sound *z* ; *sees* does not rhyme with *lease*, but with *freeze*. We shall therefore write *seez*. The consonant of *of* is not *f* but

<sup>1</sup> *Th* stands for two sounds ; the *th* in *this* is not the same as the *th* in *thing*. But there is no need to differentiate these in the simplified spelling, except in the case of children learning to read and of foreigners, when it is best to use *dh* for the sound of *th* in *this*. This is a similar device to the use of *zh* suggested above.



*v* ; and we shall therefore write *ov*. The *w* in *sword*, *whole*, *write* does not represent any sound at all ; so it will be omitted. In *uphill* the letters *p* and *h* have their ordinary value ; but in *phantom* the *ph* represents *f*. The sound is no guide to the present spelling. *Fan* spells *fan* ; in a reasonable spelling *fantom* spells the word now written with *ph*. (If those who think *ph* ought to remain because it shows the derivation from the Greek were consistent, they would write *phrenzy*, *phancy*, not *frenzy*, *fancy*, for these words also are of Greek origin.) In *nephew*, on the other hand, most of us pronounce the *ph* as *v*, and should there write *v*—which ought to please our friends the derivationists, for this brings it closer to the French *neveu*, from which it comes.

Some of the consonants are more troublesome. Worst of all are the letters *c*, *k*, *qu*, *x*. Consider their present uses :

*cat*, *city*, *ocean*, *science*, *back*.

*cook*, *back*, *knave*.

*quaint*, *quay*.

*extra*, *examine*, *anxious*.

How can the learner tell from the sounds that he must use *c* in *cat* and *k* in *kitten*? That in

*cook* the same sound is first to be written *c* and then *k*? That in *taken* he must write *k*, but *c* in *bacon*?

How is he to tell from the sounds that there is an *s* in *sit*, but *c* in *city*? *s* in *sealing*, but *c* in *ceiling*?

Why should he write *ck* when *c* or *k* would suffice? Why *cocks*, but *ox*? Why *eggs*, but *examine*?

He hears the same sounds in *kill* and *quill*, except that in the second of these the *k* is followed by a *w*; why should he not write *kw* or *cw*? The sounds of *key* and *quay* are the same; how is he to tell that they differ in spelling?

The answer to all these questions is that the learner has to learn by heart the spelling of individual words. It would assuredly be much simpler to say: when you hear the sound written *k* in *king*, write *k* always; when you hear the sound written *s* in *sit*, write *s* always. To those who are accustomed to the present spelling, *kat* for *cat* and *kook* for *cook* no doubt look odd; but that is true of any change in the spelling.

The letters *ng* in *sing* represent one sound, not two; in *anger* they represent two sounds. The

same sound is written *n* in *anger* and *anchor*. While it would be more consistent to write *angger* and *angkor* or *angker* (the *h* would, of course, disappear), it seems unnecessary to recommend a change from present usage in such cases. The spellings *anger* and *ankor* may give a little trouble to the foreigner, who may be tempted to pronounce *anger* as though it rhymed with *hanger* and *ankor*, *an-kor*; but to the child who knows both words by ear before he ever sees them, there is no difficulty.

The sound of *sh* in *shut* is written in many ways; consider these words: *sugar*, *machine*, *notion*, *special*, *ocean*, *tension*, *conscience*, *complexion*, *passion*. Here we have nine different ways of spelling the same sound. How is the learner to tell that *s* is to be written in *sugar*? That *ocean* and *notion*, *complexion* and *direction*, *tension* and *attention* are to be spelt as we actually spell them? Is it not a great simplification to say: when you hear the sound *sh*, write *sh*?

For the related sound that is written *s* in *measure*, *vision*, and *z* in *azure*, *seizure* the letters *zh* are suggested as the most suitable notation.

The sounds written *ch* in *chat* and *j* in *jet* are

really *tsh* and *dzh* ; but the present spelling *ch* and *i* is more convenient. We write *ch* in *which* and *tch* in *witch* ; it is simpler to say : write *ch* always when you hear it. The sound of *j* appears in *jet*, but also in *gem*, *wager*, *badger*, *badge*, *legion*, *spinach*. The learner cannot tell which of these spellings is correct in any particular word ; he has to learn the spelling of each word separately. It would be far simpler to give the rule : write the letter *j* when you hear the sound of *j*.

We have now dealt with the sounds :

bet	pet	dip	tip	get	king
met		nip		sing	( <i>N.B.</i> —linger think)
win	van	fan		this (or dhis)	thing
zest	so	vizhon	sheen	jest	cheer
left	him				

The only consonants that remain to be considered are *y*, *r*, and *wh*.

In the present spelling *y* represents a consonant in *yet*, and it may well be retained with this value. It also represents vowels ; the *y* in *physics*, *city* has the same value as *i* in *visit*, *citizen*, and the *y* in *type*, *why* has the same value as *i* in *find*. We shall meet with these sounds again when we come to the vowels.

The letter *r* has various pronounciations in different parts of the English-speaking world, and it will be well to keep it where it occurs in the present spelling, even in words where some have ceased to pronounce it.

The letters *wh* are also variously pronounced. In some parts there is no difference between *wh* and *w*; *which* is pronounced like *witch*, *where* like *wear*, *while* like *wile*. As, however, so many speakers of English do make a distinction, it will be well to keep *wh* where it occurs in the present spelling.

From what has gone before, you will see that the consonants on the whole present little difficulty; and that is a very important fact. In our language they are more numerous than the vowels; and it is not difficult to read a sentence in which only the consonants have been written and the vowels have been left out.<sup>1</sup> The consonants are a much more stable element in language than the vowels.

<sup>1</sup> As an example, take the sentence :

\*\*e \*\*ai\* \*\*a\*\*\* a\* \*\*\*ee o\*\*o\*\* o\* \*uc\*\*ay\* a\*\*  
\*\*u\*\*\*ay\*

and compare it with :

Th\* tr\*\*n st\*rts \*t thr\*\* \*cl\*ck \*n T\*\*sd\*\*s \*nd  
Th\*rsd\*\*s.

## DOUBLE CONSONANTS AND SILENT CONSONANTS

Before passing to the vowels, we must pay a little attention to the double consonants and the silent consonants.

When we say the word *coattail* we pronounce the *t* at the end of *coat* and the *t* at the beginning of *tail*. But the case is different in *written*; we pronounce only one *t* here. We pronounce both *p*'s in *lamppost*, but only one in *happy*. In *bigger* we pronounce one *g* only, just as in *figure*. In *all* we pronounce one *l*, just as in *awl*. In *muddy* we pronounce one *d*, just as in *study*. It is clear that where the consonant is pronounced only once, it should be written only once.

Silent consonants occur in a fair number of words, for instance in *light*, *whole*, *gnat*, *knave*, *write*, *lamb*, *autumn*, *science*, *sign*, *half*, *doubt*, *answer*, *yacht*. Where a letter represents no sound at all, it cannot be retained in a rational spelling.

## SHORT VOWELS.

The short vowels fortunately give little trouble. You will accept without hesitation the spelling of them as it occurs in *glad*, *best*, *king*, *song*, *good* and *bud*. If this use of *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *oo*, *u*<sup>1</sup> be made regular for the short vowels, some changes will of course result. The silent *u* will have to disappear from *guest*, and you will write *gest* as you write *best*; you remember that we are giving *g* uniformly the value it has in *go*, and *gest* will therefore not be confused with *jest*. You will write *frend* (cp. *lend*), *hed* (cp. *bed*), *forin* (cp. *florin*), *uther* (cp. *utter*), *flud* (cp. *bud*).

## LONG VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS.

The long vowels and diphthongs present far more difficulty, for their spelling is very varied. To give all the different ways in which these sounds are at present spelt would take up a great deal of space; it will be sufficient for our present purpose to give a few examples, and to indicate which spelling of these sounds appears to be the most convenient.

<sup>1</sup> For *u* as in *tune*, *volume*, see p. 40.

Let us take as our first example the sound of *o* in *go*, which some pronounce as a long vowel, others as a diphthong, others again as a diphthong of another kind. The following words show thirteen different ways of writing this *o* :

*Go, goes, road, rode, row, rowed, mauve, bureau, yeoman, sew, brooch, though, soul.*

They are, of course, not all equally common ; but each of the spellings exemplified by *go, goes, road, rode*, and *row* occurs in many words.

As a second example we may take the long sound of *u* in *truth*. The following words show ten different spellings of this sound :

*truth, true, rule, fruit, rheumatism, drew, mood, through, move, shoe.*

Our third example shall be the sound of *ie* in *cries*. The following words show eleven different spellings of this sound :

*cries, dial, high, height, file, cry, type, aisle, guide, buy, eye.*

These examples serve to show that nowhere is simplification more urgently needed than in the case of the long vowels and diphthongs ; at the same time it is obvious that the number of changes will be the greatest. In the following suggestions



for a simplified spelling of these sounds, the attempt has been made to produce a system that is easy to learn and that takes into account, as far as possible, what is most common in the present spelling.

(i) Write *aa* in *faather*, *ar* in *far*.

(ii) Write *ai* in *maid*, *air* in *fair*.

(iii) Write *au* in *laud*, *or* in *lord*.

(i) If we used the single *a* we should get into difficulties ; thus we are bound to drop the silent *l* in *calm*, *palm*, etc., but we cannot write *cam*, *pam*. We have the digraph *aa* in the present spelling of the word 'bazaar.' Although some make no difference in pronunciation between *father* and *farther*, many do ; the distinction must therefore be kept in the spelling and the *r* retained in the latter word. Some do not say *faast* but *fast* (with the same vowel as in *fat*) ; these may like to write this and similar words with one *a* only.

(ii) It is clear that the present *made* and *maid* will have the same spelling ; *day* will be written *dai*, *great* will become *grait* ; *there* and *their* will become *thair*, *bear* and *bare* : *bair*. On the other hand *pail*, *pair*, *maid*, *pain*, and many other words will remain unchanged.

(iii) *Haul, haunt, caught*, etc., will retain their *au*; but in other words a change will be necessary. Thus we shall have *baul, clau, braud, baut, thaut*. *Or* will remain in *form, port, orb*, and many other words; but *more* will become *mor*.

(iv) Write *ee* in *feel*, *eer* in *seer*.

(v) Write *oe* in *loed*.

(iv) We shall then be no longer troubled by such difficulties as *speak* and *speech*, which will look much more closely related as *speek* and *speech*; *feet* and *feat* will have the same spelling, as also *beet* and *beat*, *meet* and *meat*. (As was shown on p. 23, this can hardly ever lead to ambiguity.) The single letter *e* is found to be sufficient when a vowel follows, as in *theory*; and it may also be written in certain monosyllables, such as *he, she, we, me, be*.

(v) The sound of *o* in *go* has many different spellings, as was shown on p. 36, and no one spelling is at present more common than any other, unless it be *o*, which we require for the short vowel of *got*; on the whole *æ* seems the best choice. Here again, the *e* may be omitted before another vowel, as in *going, poet*; but then we strictly speaking require a diacritic (¨) to show

that the *oi*, *oe* are to be pronounced as separate vowels, not as in *coin*, *goes*. It has therefore been suggested that the familiar type *æ* might be used for this sound wherever it occurs (e.g. *gæ*, *gæing*). Whichever course is adopted, the *e* may be dropped in the case of a few monosyllables (*o*, *no*, *so*) where there can be no doubt as to the pronunciation.

(vi) Write *y* in *my*.

The choice of a symbol for this diphthong is not easy. The most common of the present spellings (see p. 36) are *i* (which is required for the short vowel), *ie*, and *y*. The use of *ie* would give some trouble; thus *diet* would have to be spelt *dieet*. It is probably better to use *y*, especially as a single letter is obviously preferable to a digraph. The personal pronoun, with its anomalous capital, may continue to be written *I*.

(vii) Write *oo* in *food*, *oor* in *poor*.

(viii) Write *eu* in *neu*, *eur* in *demeur*.

(vii and viii) Quite the most difficult problem in connexion with the vowels was to determine the best spelling of the sounds written *ue* in *true* and *cue* respectively. The present spelling is most confusing. For *ue* in *true* this was shown on

p. 36; as for *ue* in *cue*, it is now spelt in at least ten different ways:

*cue, cubic, cube, suit, eulogy, adieu, few, view, beauty, ewe.*

It is pretty generally agreed that the letter *u* should be assigned to the vowel heard in *fun*. How are we to represent the long *oo* in *food*, the short *oo* in *good*, the long "yoo" in *tune*, and the short "yoo" in *volume*? Most varied solutions have been offered, among the representations proposed being *oo, uu, yu, yue, eu, ew, w, v*. At present we are using *oo* for the long and the short sounds in *food, good*, and *eu* for the long and the short sounds in *tune, volume*. The use of the same notation for the long and short sounds gives no trouble as regards *eu*; but the use of *oo* alone for the vowels of *pull* and *pool, full* and *fool*, removes the distinction between these words (and perhaps a few others).

(ix) Write *oi* in coin.

(x) Write *ou* in count.

There can be little doubt about the spelling of these sounds. It is true that at the end of words the present spelling generally has *oy* and *ow*; but to make this a rule would be a useless complication.

(xi) Write *er* in *fern*, *sister*.

Many speakers make no distinction between *er* in *fern*, *ir* in *fir*, *ur* in *fur*, and *or* in *word*. Some may prefer to write *ur* in such words as *burn*, *hurt*, etc.

#### VOWELS IN UNSTRESSED SYLLABLES.

The question how far the use of *er* should be extended is most difficult to answer, for it compels us to face the problem of the vowels in unstressed syllables. Take the following examples :

*able* and *label* ; *idle* and *idol* ; *mettle* and *metal*.

*tailor* and *trailer* ; *alter* and *altar* ; *beggar* and *bigger* ; *stationery* and *stationary*.

*balsam* and *venom* ; *infamy*, *enemy* and *economy* ; *infamous* and *blasphemous*.

*ocean* and *notion* ; *musician* and *position*.

*barren* and *baron* ; *gotten* and *cotton*.

*distant* and *persistent* ; *distance* and *sentence* ; *tenancy* and *clemency*.

Read these words in a natural way ; you will find it easier to do this if you introduce them into sentences. It is probable that you will then realize that our spelling shows a variety of vowel

letters where in our ordinary pronunciation only one vowel sound is heard. This 'obscure' or 'neutral' vowel, as it is called, is of frequent occurrence in English, as also in French and German. In a purely phonetic alphabet it is usually represented by the sign ə (an inverted e).

You may, however, have noticed that public speakers who are very deliberate and precise in their speech do make distinctions in some of the cases of which examples have been given above; and there are many who believe that this is a practice to be commended and worthy of general imitation and extension. They maintain that this adds to the beauty of the language, and that the variety of the vowel letters, as found in the present spelling of the unstressed endings, should be indicated in the pronunciation also; so that, for instance, the second syllable of *moment* would be pronounced like *meant* (which is, indeed, done by a good many) and that the second syllable of *idol*, *sailor* should be pronounced like *doll*, *lore* respectively. They also maintain that in many cases it is desirable to retain the present spelling of the vowel because of the existence of derived words in which the vowel is stressed and appears

with its full value, *e.g.* *metal* and *metallic*, *idol* and *idolatry*, *baron* and *baronial*, *ocean* and *oceanic*.

Others, however, regard such a pronunciation of the unstressed vowels as an unwarrantable revival of what has long disappeared. They say that the reduction of the vowels in unstressed syllables, far from being a sign of deterioration, is a sign of progress; that what has taken place, for instance, in German and other kindred languages, has its justifiable parallel in our own. In other languages this development shows itself in the spelling as well as in the spoken language; for instance, the *e* in German *Bruder leider Häuser* goes back to various vowels, which ceased to be differentiated in the spelling when the 'neutral' vowel had taken their place in the spoken language. They also point to the usage of the poets, who may surely be regarded as not indifferent to the beauty of the language, but who do not hesitate to use such rhymes as *ever, endeavour* (Wordsworth, Byron), *sever, endeavour* (Th. Moore), *tender, splendour* (Shelley), *motion, ocean* (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley), *sentence, repentance* (Byron), *heaven, Devon* (Tennyson), *anguors, angers* (Tennyson).

There is another vowel that appears commonly in unstressed syllables, a vowel which resembles the *i* of *pit*. The following examples show the present spellings of this sound:

*city* and *citizen*; *carry* and *carrier*; *captain* and *satin*; *roses* and *posies*; *volley* and *folly*; *purest* and *purist*; *postage*, *vestige*, and *privilege*.

The practical question for us is: How are we to deal with the vowels in unstressed syllables in our scheme of simplified spelling? It is impossible to tell which of the two incompatible views stated above will win the day; time alone can decide. In these circumstances it will be wise to retain for the present any differences which may survive, not only in the spelling, but in very precise speech. Those who prefer a spelling more in accordance with their natural speech (by no means the same thing as 'careless' or 'slipshod' speech) should be at liberty to use it.

#### THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING IN BRIEF.

We have now dealt with the sounds of the English language and their representation by means of a simple and reasonably consistent spelling, of which this table gives a summary:



## CONSONANT SOUNDS.

bet	pet	dip	tip	get	king
met		nip		sing	(N.B.—linger, think)
win	whim	van	fan	this	(or dhis) thing
zest	so	vizhon	sheen	jest	cheer
left	ryt	yes		him	

## VOWEL SOUNDS.

glad	best	king	song	
faather	maid	leed	laud	loed
far	fair	seer	lord	
good	voleum	joi	bud	
food	teun	mount	fern, sister	
poor	demeur			

Realize that when the child has learnt to distinguish the sounds, this little table gives him the way in which they are to be spelt. Then turn to any book now in use for teaching our spelling and ask yourself which is the more economical system. If it implied economy at the expense of educational soundness, you would rightly give it no further attention. That it is educationally sound has been shown above; but it will be well to give here, in a few words, the advantages of this system of simplified spelling.

## ADVANTAGES OF THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING.

*It is easy to learn.* Try for yourself. Say a sentence and then write it in simplified spelling. If you do find difficulty, it is because you have not been accustomed to distinguish the sounds you utter, because in childhood your ear-training was neglected.

*It can be taught by rational methods.* The process will be this: The attention of the child is drawn to the sounds he uses in speaking. His organs of speech as well as his ears are trained. Then he learns to represent the sounds by letters. He does not learn the spelling of individual words, which calls for excessive memorizing. (There are other and far better ways of practising the memory.)

*The training of the ear and of the vocal organs which is an essential part of learning the simplified spelling is of great value.* It is useful in leading to clearer speech, and forms the basis of all good work in elocution and singing. It is the best preparation for learning shorthand. It affords great help in mastering the pronunciation of foreign languages. There is no doubt that the

simplification of spelling would very soon lead to a great improvement in pronunciation. Slovenliness and vulgarity are fostered by the lack of a clear and constant relation between the written symbol and the spoken sound.

*One who has learnt the simplified spelling will be able to read books in the 'old spelling' with little trouble.* Many words are the same. In devising the simplified spelling care has been taken to make the least possible change that is consistent with efficiency. After a little practice, it would be quite easy to *read* the 'old spelling'; but no one would be expected to *write* it, and it is this which requires so much effort.

*It is easy to print.* As it contains no new letters and no diacritics, existing founts of type will serve perfectly. There is no need to effect any change in typewriters, linotype machines, etc. The alphabet used in telegraphy and in signalling will remain the same.

*It makes English the most serviceable language for intercourse within the Empire and between nations.* No other language offers the same combination of advantages as ours. It has a very simple grammar and a very rich vocabulary ;

it is the key to a grand literature. Its only serious drawback is—the spelling.

If we agree to make the spelling of English as reasonable and straightforward as is that of Spanish or of Italian, we shall confer an inestimable boon on the children of untold generations to come. We shall add to the efficiency of all English-speaking peoples by effecting an immense improvement in elementary education, by which every child, rich or poor, will be the gainer. We shall ensure the continued spread of the English language throughout the world.

#### HOW YOU CAN HELP THE MOVEMENT FOR SPELLING REFORM.

When you look at the names of those who are interesting themselves in the movement, when you see that men like Mr. William Archer, Lord Bryce, Dr. G. B. Hunter, Dr. Macnamara, Professor Gilbert Murray, Sir Frederick Pollock, Dr. Michael Sadler, Mr. H. G. Wells, to mention only a few, are keen members of the Simplified Spelling Society, you may be inclined to say: I may well leave the work to these men. That,

however, is not what they want at all. They may be able to do more than you, but they cannot dispense with your active support. Like every other great movement, it appeals to all educated men and women. We want your personal interest, we want your help in the campaign for simplified spelling.

You can help a great deal. Think about the questions involved, talk about them to your friends, take an interest in the spoken language. When you meet with ignorance and prejudice, do your utmost to dispel these enemies to all open-minded consideration of the problem. The arguments that you will have to answer are always the same.

BRIEF ANSWERS TO THE ARGUMENTS OF  
OPPONENTS.

*The simplified spelling looks queer, ugly, etc.*

Answer: Prejudice, born of habit. Familiarity, in this case, breeds ill-placed admiration. Those brought up on the simplified spelling will be just as devoted to that, and with better cause.<sup>1</sup>

*Words of the same sound now spelt differently  
would be spelt alike, which would lead to  
confusion.*

<sup>1</sup> You may perhaps hear some one exclaim: "Shakespeare's spelling is good enough for me." We happen to have no evidence as to Shakespeare's spelling—except that he was not particular as to the spelling of his name; here is an example of Shakespeare's printers' spelling:

How fweet the moone-light fleepes vpon this banke,  
Heere will we fit, and let the founds of muficke  
Creepe in our eares, foft ftilnes and the night  
Become the tutches of fweet harmonie.

Or again some one may say: "I should not like to see the Bible in simplified spelling." Probably ~~he~~ would not, at first; and it is also probable that ~~he~~ would not like it in the spelling of the sixteenth century. After all, it is the meaning that matters; and those accustomed to reading the Bible in the simplified spelling would revere its teaching no less than we do.

It makes that nonsense (the Bryn Bull) easier to understand.

Answer: There is no confusion when the words are spoken; why should there be any when they are written? The context makes the meaning clear. Some words, now spelt alike, would be differentiated.

*A change of spelling would obscure the derivation.*

Answer: Granted, sometimes; in other cases it would make it clearer. In our ordinary use of language we are not at the same time studying etymology; for the student of etymology the 'old spelling' will still be available for reference.

*It is good for children to work hard.*

Answer: Of course it is; and there are plenty of subjects of great intrinsic importance at which they can work hard. But where is the intrinsic importance of writing *tho*, *though* and *frend*, *friend*? To compel them to learn all the redundancies and inconsistencies of our spelling because of the hard work involved is as sensible as to make them write with their feet rather than with their hands because of the harder work entailed in doing so.

Brief answers have been given here ; but all these objections have been dealt with on earlier pages of this book, except the last,—which is really too contemptible to call for an extensive answer.

#### ADOPTION OF THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING.

You may also like to show that you are a friend of progress by making use of the simplified spelling in your letters or in print. The more often people see words spelt in the reasonable way, the more quickly will they get accustomed to the idea of change.

Possibly, however, you may prefer to wait until the scheme is more widely known before adopting it in its complete form. In the meantime you may be willing to adopt certain obvious simplifications which form part of the proposed scheme. The following rules are suggested for provisional use :

1. Drop silent letters when this does not involve a change of pronunciation ; *e.g.* write *dout* for *doubt*, *activ* for *active*, *definit* for *definite*, *program* for *programme*, *pich* for *pitch*, but not *brit* for



*bright*. (Do not adopt *brite*, which is contrary to the spelling *y* suggested for this diphthong in the scheme.)

2. Where a consonant is doubled in a single word (not in a compound), drop one letter when this does not involve a change in pronunciation, *e.g.* write *buton* for *button*, *teror* for *terror*, *begining* for *beginning*, but keep the two letters in *coattail*, *lamppost*, *interrupt*, *batted*, *latter*. (The forms *bated*, *later* in the present spelling do not have this value, and confusion would arise.)

3. Write *t* in place of the ending *ed* of many verbs, whenever *t* represents the pronunciation; *e.g.* *past* for *passed*, *prest* for *pressed*.

4. Substitute *f* for *ph*.

#### THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING SOCIETY.

Finally, you can show your interest in the movement by joining the Simplified Spelling Society, the office of which is at 44 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. However limited your means may be, you will be able to subscribe one shilling a year, which makes you an Associate Member; this subscription assures us of your

moral support, which we value highly. If you can afford five shillings a year, this payment will make you an Active Member, and will help the Society to extend its work. It is no easy task that we have taken in hand ; our appeal is to millions, scattered all over the earth. We want to establish branches in every important centre where English is spoken. We want to gain the sympathetic help of every newspaper. We want to dispel prejudice and prepare the path for reform. A great undertaking needs money, and we appeal without hesitation for pecuniary help to those who can afford it. But to all, rich and poor alike, we appeal for the earnest consideration of the case for simplified spelling which has been put forward in these pages ; we believe that there are few causes more worthy of support than this, which aims at the prevention of waste in our schools, at better educational methods, and at rendering more serviceable for all the English language.

To the SECRETARY, SIMPLIFIED SPELLING SOCIETY,  
44 Great Russell Street, London, W.C. 1.

I wish to be enrolled as an <sup>Active</sup> Associate Member of the  
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